NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 391. Price, Five Cents.

A PRINCESS OF THE UNDERWORLD

OR THE MYSTERIOUS BURGLARY AT LAKEVIEW

Still watching Nick, whose back was turned, Miss Dumont held the ring over one of the glasses, and a small quantity of liquid fell silently into the wine.

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A PRINCESS OF THE UNDERWORLD;

OR,

The Mysterious Burglary at Lake View.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

"I DO NOT DEDUCT; I ADD."

"I think, Nick, that you will have to go into the burglar business yourself."

"How is that? What do you mean, chief?"

"I mean that it seems to me to be the only way in which there is any hope of getting on the trail of the most crafty and expert thief I have ever known."

"It strikes me, chief, that you cannot be said to know this one," said the detective, smilingly.

"True. I do not."

"Well," said Nick, speaking with great deliberation, "I am of the opinion that she——"

The chief of the Chicago police bounded from his chair.

"She!" he exclaimed.

"That is what I said," replied Nick. "She is the pronoun I used."

The chief cooled down, settled back in his chair, relighted his cigar, and asked:

"Why?"

"That is rather a difficult question to answer off-hand," replied Nick. "A man in my business often speaks on the spur of the instant and almost entirely from impulse, as I did just now, but, all the same, I find—in my case at least—that I usually have a very good foundation of reasons behind it."

"Am I to understand," asked the chief, deliberately, "that you think this slickest of all thieves, this phantom burglar, this silent, spooklike crook, this all-around expert in the methods of the under world, is a woman?"

"That is my opinion at the present moment."

"Why?"

"I have no good reason other than the one I have already given you."

"Which is no good at all."

"Perhaps not."

"I have never known a time when theory, in our business, amounted to a pin."

"I have, chief. Theories are always valuable."

"There is a whole lot of bosh about this principle of dealing in deductions."

"My dear chief, I never deal in deductions. I take the opposite course."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, let us, for want of a better word, call it induction."

"I am afraid that I do not quite catch on yet."

"No? Let us say, then, that when I came here to see you and you told me about this series of burglaries which has been getting your entire department by the ears for the last three months, you gave me that which represents the simple figure two. Very well. I take that figure two, put it in my pocket—so to speak—and I set out at once to find enough to add to that figure you have given me, in order to make the total of the bunch equal four. Catch on?"

"Not quite."

"I don't deduct; I add. I think the matter over a bit, and, perhaps, in thinking, discover a fraction lying around somewhere. I catch on to that and hold it. By and by I find another one and I keep that. Perhaps, suddenly, I may fall upon a whole one, and that helps me considerably, because I only want to make four out of it all in order to have my case."

"It sounds dead easy," remarked the chief, with the suggestion of a sneer.

"Then it sounds entirely out of proportion to what it really is," replied Nick. "I have experienced a great many occasions when I have had three and ninety-nine one-hundredths in my possession, and have been unable to put my fingers on the single one-hundredth part that was lacking; and, chief, your case is never complete until it adds up exactly four."

"Humph!" said the chief.

"That is the very rock upon which so many of the would-be detectives split," continued Nick. "They get almost enough to make four, and they think they have got the whole thing; or they get enough to make five or six, and err on the other side of the question. If you wish to jump from the bank of a river into a boat, you must alight exactly in the middle of the boat, for you are just as likely to get wet if you jump over the boat as you are if you jump short of it, aren't you?"

"I suppose you are, since the river is on both sides of it."

"Precisely."

"Well, what of this case. How do you make your theories conform to this occasion?"

"Let me see how I will answer that. You have told of, say, thirty-five burglaries, jewel robberies, etcetera, that have mystified your department during the last three months."

"About that—yes."

"They have occurred in widely different parts of the city."

"Yes; if you look at them consecutively."

"Last night there was one in Lake View. Night before last there was one on the South Side. The night before that a greater one happened out on the West Side. Then you describe one in Lake Forrest; one at Highland Park; one here and one there; one everywhere save at or near the point where another one has occurred within a fortnight, at least. Is that something of an epitome of the facts?"

"It just about sizes up the situation—yes."

"Well, chief, I harbored the idea, for a moment, that the thief might be a woman, for the sole reason that women have more opportunities for arranging the details of affairs of this sort than men do."

"I cannot agree with that statement."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't think it is correct."

"Chief, how many burglars have you arrested, in the course of your career?"

"Thousands."

"Sure. Now, how many of them have been men?"

"Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand."

"Sure. Now, how many of those men possessed the appearance, the personnel, the education and the talent which could have taken them safely through a crowded drawing room without a mistake; about one out of each ninety-nine, eh?"

"Maybe so."

"And was there one in the lot, whom you can remember, who might have polished himself up to a point where he would have become an acquisition to society?"

"Oh, I have known two or three in my career who might have done so?"

"Very well. Suppose the whole lot of burglars who have come under your observation in your career to be ten thousand; that would give us, in the lot, ten women burglars, according to your estimate."

"About that."

"Now, do you happen to remember one out of the ten who was not young, beautiful, smart—and, above all, adaptable?"

"Only one. She was an old hag."

"Well, we will cut her out. She is the exception which proves the rule. We will say, then, that in nine cases out of ten, the woman is young, good-looking and adaptable. She must be the last, and if she were not the first and second, she would not have been selected for the work. Now, chief, let us leave that point of the subject for a moment."

"What next?"

"How would you describe the most successful burglars who have come under your notice?"

"I don't know how to answer that question."

"Well, would you include them among those you have captured, or among those who have escaped capture?"

"I see the point now. Of course, there have been a great many who have escaped capture."

"Certainly. And in cases where you have made captures, you have almost without exception discovered that the captured man had pals—belonged, in fact, to what they call a mob—and eventually you rounded up the whole bunch, eh?"

"Yes."

"The chaps you have not captured are the ones who have left mysterious and widely separated crimes behind them—like these that are now in question, eh?"

"Yes."

"And from the long habit of getting the bracelets upon a gang or a mob, you inevitably begin looking for a mob as soon as you are notified that a burglary has been committed."

"I guess that is so."

"It is so."

"Nine out of ten times they work in gangs or mobs."

"True. And it is the tenth one who always eludes you. He does not get caught, because he works alone. There is nobody but himself to make mistakes. There is nobody but himself to drink a little too much booze sometime, and then to talk unguardedly. There is nobody but himself to leave clews behind him when he has made a successful raid. There is nobody but himself to quarrel with after the robbery is committed. There is nobody but himself to haggle over a division of the spoils, and there is nobody but himself to keep under cover when things are getting hot and it is necessary to lie low for a while. Now another point."

"There are lots of points to this thing, Nick."

"On the contrary, there is only one, really."

"Well, go ahead."

"Your burglar who works in a mob always tackles a big haul. He and his pals will work for months over one big job before they get it ripe and ready to squeeze, eh?"

"Sure."

"And it is a rare thing that you find them bothering themselves about residences."

"That's true."

"They prefer a bank or a store. A factory or a warehouse. They have to divide the plunder among so many that the job must be a big one in order to be worth the trouble they devote to it."

"Certainly."

"A twenty-thousand dollar jewelry steal, divided among ten, where the lesser ones get only a percentage

of a unit, leaves the individual profits too small to bother with."

"Sure."

"Whereas, a twenty-thousand dollar jewelry haul, where one person only is interested in the results, is worth while."

"You bet."

"Good. Now, these burglaries you have described have, in single instances, amounted to more than that sum only on rare occasions. The robbery last night, for example."

"Yes. But they have been so frequent, so many, and so successful, that even a gang of ten might have been well satisfied with the results, even on percentages."

"True, chief, only a gang of ten could not have done this thing without getting you on the track of one or more of them long before this time. There are too many to spend the money; too many to dispose of the stolen goods, and there are too many clumsy feet to glide over the carpets and through the halls of the houses that have been robbed, not to have had some of them attracting attention before this."

"I guess that is so, too."

"Now, I'll tell you why it occurred to me that it is all the work of a woman. Mind, I do not insist as yet that I am correct, for it is only a surmise, resulting from what you have told me. You must remember that I have not looked over the ground at all."

"I do, of course."

"Well, then, in every case which you have described, the occupants of the houses that have been entered have not been disturbed, and not in a single instance have they known of the visit of the robber until the morning afterward. In every case, it would appear as if the thief had gone directly to the spot where the valuables were located, as if in possession of accurate knowledge of their location. And in every case, the delicacy of touch in removing the valuables without disturbing other things at all, suggests to me a woman's hand."

CHAPTER II.

THE WIT OF A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.

"I think, chief," continued Nick, after a short pause, "if you will give me a note to the people who were robbed last night, in Lake View, I will take a run out there and have a talk with the woman who lost her diamonds. After that I will see you again."

"All right. I have told you all there is about it, but if you think you would prefer to get your information first hand——"

"I always prefer it that way, chief, just as I do my clothes and shoes."

"Exactly."

"Before I start out, I have one request to make."

"All right. What is it?"

"There will doubtless be another of these robberies within a few days."

"Doubtless. They have been taking place at the rate of about three a week, ever since they began. Sometimes one; sometimes two; never more than three in one week. What is the request?"

"When the next one occurs, I want it kept from the public."

"Eh? Why?"

"There are a lot of reasons. The principal one is that I don't think the police need any extra advertising just now. And, chief——"

"Well?"

"If I should happen to hear, by any accident, that Nick Carter is in Chicago, Nick Carter will be out of Chicago and on his way back to New York on the first train after that. You can keep my presence here a secret if you wish to do so, and I insist upon it."

"I have already told you that the fact shall not leak out."

"I don't want it to leak out of this office through the department. If your officers are all aware of my presence, you can bank on it that the thieves will know it too. I'll go now and make my call upon Mrs. Sunderlin."

An hour later the detective stood upon the steps of the mansion where the Sunderlins lived, within a

stone's throw of the lake shore, in Lake View, and to the chance observer, who had occasion to take notice of him, he appeared to be a young minister bent upon the errand of making his parish calls.

And when the door was opened and he was admitted, the card he gave to the butler for delivery to the mistress of the house, bore the imprint:

REV. ALEXANDER CURRIE MASON, D. D.

It was a good-sounding name and it admitted him at once. Ten minutes later the door opened and a young woman of striking beauty came to him in the reception room.

She held the card in her hand as she came through the doorway, and glancing at it to reassure herself of the name, she came forward gracefully and with a gliding motion which suggested that she skimmed over the floor rather than walked upon it.

Nick felt that he was vaguely startled when she appeared, for he had not expected to encounter so young a person or such an unusually beautiful woman as this one proved to be. But whatever his emotions upon beholding her, nothing of them appeared in his face as he rose from his chair and bowed low before her.

"I am greatly honored that you would receive me so graciously, madam," he said, in the slow and regular tones which bespoke the character he had assumed.

She glanced once again at the card she held in her hand and then sank gracefully upon a chair opposite him.

"I do not recall your name as one that I have heard before," she said, in a low tone that was strangely soft and musical. "Are we, perhaps, acquaintances, or have I some time attended service at your church?"

"Neither, madam, I assure you," replied Nick. "I have come here, as it were, out of the—er—clouds."

"How interesting!" she responded, without the slightest trace of irony in her tone or manner, and permitting it to appear only in the words she uttered. "Don't you find it rather—er—damp, living in the clouds?"

"Splendid!" was the thought which darted through Nick's mind. "Here is a smart woman, and just the one to be of some help in this matter." Aloud he said:

"The warmth of the atmosphere which surrounds you, madam, would dispel forever, not only whatever of dampness might have entered upon one's life, but even the memory of it."

"Thank you," she said. "That is a very pretty compliment. Have you others at hand that are equally as good?"

"Others, madam? Millions of them. Nor did I bring them with me, as you would seem to assume. I find them in your presence."

"Delightful!" She laughed outright. "I hope that the shock of seeing me has not made you forget the errand which brought you here."

"I certainly should have forgotten it forever had you not reminded me of it. I have come to condole with you about the loss of your jewels."

"Indeed! And wherefore, may I ask?"

"It must be such a terrible loss."

"But you surely did not come here merely to tell me that."

"No. I came to offer my services in assisting you to recover them."

"Ah! Then you would abandon the work of saving the sinner in order to—er—convict him instead; is that it?"

"Something like that." Nick bowed.

"Instead of taking him, or them, into the fold and washing them as white as wool, or something like that, you would nail them to the cross? Of course you understand that I speak figuratively."

"Quite so. Also refreshingly. I have not heard the idea expressed so well before."

"No? In plain English, Mr.—er—Mason, what do you want?"

"I wish to assist you in finding your jewels."

"Unfortunately for your zeal, Mr. Mason, I have not lost any jewels."

"Indeed! Why, I understood——"

"For the very good reason that I had no jewels to lose."

"And yet," said Nick, wondering what the woman could be driving at, "the papers are filled with accounts of the robbery which occurred here in this house last

night, and with a description of the diamonds that were taken."

"That is quite true. The one mistake you have made is in supposing that the diamonds were mine."

"Ah!"

"You see, Mr. Mason, I am not Mrs. Sunderlin."

"Neither am I Mr. Mason," replied Nick, altering his tones and speaking with the alertness which belonged to him; and the change was so great and so unmistakable that the woman started to her feet with a little sharp exclamation of astonishment.

"Then who are you?" she demanded.

"I am a detective sent here by the chief of police to investigate, as far as possible, the loss of the jewels. If, for a moment, I fell into the error of thinking that you were Mrs. Sunderlin, then certainly Mrs. Sunderlin should be under eternal obligations to me."

"Why, pray?"

"If you will cross the room and glance at the reflection you will see in the mirror, you will not need to repeat that question, I assure you," replied Nick.

"But you have not yet seen Mrs. Sunderlin, sir."

"I have never seen any woman who might not be elated because of the mistake I made, madam."

Another little peal of silvery laughter fell from her lips; then instantly she became as solemn as an owl.

"So you are really a detective?" she inquired.

"I really am."

"You certainly do not look it."

"I tried not to when I came here."

"Mrs. Sunderlin feared that you were after a subscription to some charity list, so she asked me to come down and tell you that after a loss of some sixty thousand dollars' worth of jewels, she could not think of subscribing. Now, I suppose, I am to return and tell her that for a consideration you are willing to undertake to return the jewels to her—for of course you do not expect me to believe the statement you have made."

It is impossible to describe the cold contempt with which this beautiful woman managed to impregnate what she said; and she added:

"Doubtless if the consideration were sufficiently large you could guarantee a return of some of them—let us say those which have been so thoroughly described in the papers—within, say forty-eight hours."

"Scarcely so soon as that," replied Nick, imperturbably.

"But for a consideration you would agree to almost anything? Is that it?"

"There is one consideration upon which I might venture to make such a promise," said Nick.

"Suppose you tell me what it is. It might have weight with Mrs. Sunderlin."

"That I might have your wit, your penetration, your sagacity, your ineffable charm and your matchless beauty to assist me."

She rose from her chair and stood for an instant looking at the detective coldly; and then, without a trace of anger, or in fact anything save utter indifference, she said:

"It occurs to me, sir, that your last remark borders closely upon impertinence."

"Indeed?" replied Nick. "May I ask if you have paused to analyze your own remarks, as addressed to me?"

"It was scarcely worth my while to do that," she retorted. "Perhaps, however, I have been wrong. You may really have come from the chief of police, after all, and I am, therefore, in error."

"Quite so," said Nick.

"In that case, doubtless you have brought something with you as an identification."

"Oh, yes. A mere note of introduction from the chief. Nothing more. I might have brought his photograph or himself even, had I known——"

She interrupted him by laughing outright.

"Say no more," she said. "We have sparred long enough. Give me your note and I will take it to the madam, for I am afraid that you are too much for me at fencing with words."

CHAPTER III.

THE WORK OF A NOVICE.

Nick Carter was left alone several minutes while the young woman who had received him carried his message to Mrs. Sunderlin; but she presently returned with the announcement that the mistress of the house was much too ill to be interviewed.

"She instructed me to say to you that she is so distraught over her loss, and that the shock of realizing that horrible burglars have been inside her very own room while she was sleeping, and—she did not say this, but I will—that the thought that they have looked upon her when she was not prepared to receive company, when her hair was disheveled and her complexion was on her bureau with a part of her hair also; in short, the horror of the whole affair has so upset her that she is not in condition to see anybody; therefore you will have to excuse her."

"I am very sorry," said Nick.

"You don't look it," retorted his companion. "The fact is, her maid took fright at what had happened in the house, and left her without notice this morning, and the maid is the only, or rather was the only person in the house who could handle properly the complexion I have referred to."

"I understand. Then there is no hope that I can see her to-day at all."

"Not the slightest; nor to-morrow, unless she finds another maid. She ventured, however, to make a suggestion."

"Indeed. What was that?"

"She thought that perhaps I might serve you in her place."

"Admirably—and most agreeably, I'm sure."

"How pleasant of you to say such things. You do it, too, as if you had really graduated from a most proficient school."

"I did. Were you here last night, when the robbery occurred?"

"I suppose so. I am not sure."

"That is strange. Do you walk in your sleep?"

"No; but I have heard the theory advanced that we all travel over the world during our periods of sleep, so you know I might really have been in China or Timbuctoo when the burglars were in the house."

"You live here?"

"Oh, yes."

"Would it not be a good beginning if you were to tell me who you are?"

"It might. I don't know. You are the expert. Do you think it would?"

"Assuredly."

"I am Mrs. Sunderlin's hired companion."

"Indeed. What an exceedingly reckless woman she must be!"

"Why so?"

"You have suggested that she tries to appear young and beautiful. Now, to have so much real beauty near her all the time——"

"That will do. I know the rest of it, for I have heard it often, and it hasn't the least effect upon me, I assure you. The fact is, she uses me as a model. I am of value as a criterion—a standard, so to speak; and besides, she pretends that we are cousins and insists that she looks like me."

"I see. Are you cousins?"

"About fifty-seventh, I think. It is so thin, the relation, that it makes dreadfully poor seasoning, and if she should die intestate, my collateral share of her millions would amount to about a carfare into the city."

"Rather distant, eh?"

"Quite, remote."

"I suppose you were baptized once, weren't you?" asked Nick, smiling.

"I believe so. I do not recall the ceremony, but I have been told that I was there."

"Was it N or M?"

"Neither. It was Cora."

"Do you realize the fact that you are most tantalizingly uncommunicative? It would save so much time and space and wear and tear if you would tell me your name."

"Really? That is quite easy. My name—my full

name—all the name I am blessed with at all is Cora Dumont."

"Spinster?" asked Nick, smiling. It seemed absurd to class this young and beautiful creature among spinsters, and for an instant even she was startled.

"I had not thought of it before in that light exactly," she said, "but I suppose I am a spinster. At what age does an unmarried woman become a spinster?"

"I don't think there is a fixed time," replied Nick.

"Well, perhaps I am safe for a year or so yet. I am only twenty."

"Now, if you don't mind," said Nick, "we will touch upon the robbery."

"Oh, I don't in the least mind, thank you."

"Are the accounts which appeared in the papers approximately correct?"

"I haven't read them, so I could not say as to that."

"At least I know the list of articles taken to be correct. They are kept in Mrs. Sunderlin's room, I believe."

"All of them?"

"Yes. All of them."

"Was anything other than the jewels taken, do you know?"

"Oh, yes. There was some money."

"I had not heard of that. How much?"

"Between twelve and thirteen hundred dollars."

"Where was that?"

"Also in madam's room."

"In the bureau?"

"No; in her desk."

"Anything else?"

"I think not."

"Did the burglars enter your own room?"

"If they did I am not aware of the fact. I neither saw nor spoke to them."

"Nothing was missed from your room?"

"Nothing."

"Do you know that any other room was entered?"

"Oh, yes. The dining room. You know there is a large safe there, in which the silver is kept. The thief or thieves made a determined effort to open the safe, it would seem, but utterly without success."

"Can you take me to the dining room?"

"Certainly. Come with me."

She led the way through the hall and into the dining room, where she pointed toward the door of a safe that was let into the wall.

Nick drew a chair close to the safe door and seated himself; but he made only a cursory examination, after which he rose, replaced the chair where he found it, and crossing the room to the bow window, seated himself there.

"Not a very determined effort to blow the safe," he remarked. "It looks like the work of a novice."

"Perhaps they were frightened away," suggested Miss Dumont.

"That is more than likely. Was anything at all taken from this room?"

"No."

"Was anything found here which the burglar had left behind?"

"Nothing."

"Who discovered the marks on the safe?"

"The butler."

"When?"

"While I was at breakfast."

"Did he discover them, or did you?"

"He did, of course. I was seated with my back toward the safe; in that chair, there."

"Ah! At what time was the loss of the jewels discovered?"

"Not till afterward; that is, not till after I went upstairs again after my breakfast, and after the discovery that somebody had attacked the safe in this room."

"So, really, you gave the first warning to Mrs. Sunderlin."

"I suppose so. It was because I told her that the safe had been attacked, and that a burglar had been in the house, that she searched for her jewels, only to discover that they were all missing."

"Was there no trace whatever inside the room, that it had been visited by strangers during the night?"

"Oh, yes, there were several traces when we came to look for them. Things had been moved and not properly replaced. There was a lace collar on the floor

near the bureau which had positively not been taken out of it for many weeks. A Japanese screen had been moved so that it would shade the light from Mrs. Sunderlin's eyes in case she should happen to awaken, and also so that it would cut off her view of the bureau if she happened to open her eyes while the intruder was at work."

"Anything else?"

"I believe not."

"The chief of police has told me that the house was entered from the roof; that a rope ladder was used to get upon the roof, as the house stands alone and far removed from others. Unfortunately for the sake of any investigation I would make, the rope has been removed, but doubtless you saw it before it was taken down."

"Certainly."

"I wish you would describe what you saw, to me. Tell me all about it exactly according to the impressions you received at the time, and not according to what you have thought out about it since then."

"I don't know as I can do that."

"Try."

"I am afraid that I am not much of a detective. I doubt if I saw, or would see things in a fashion that would benefit you at all in your researches, but as I saw them, I will endeavor to describe them."

CHAPTER IV.

THE THEORIES OF A WOMAN.

"This method of getting into a house over the roof when that house is detached from all others, and when there are so many easier methods at hand, strikes me as being rather original," said Nick. "Now, I have had only a cursory glance at the building, but I am sure that I would experience no difficulty in entering the house at night, with the assistance of a good jimmy, by way of one of the windows that open on the front porch."

"Possibly," she replied. "Only you know that the house is thoroughly provided with burglar alarms."

"I see."

"There is not an outside door or window which is not connected with it—and the alarm rings here, and at the police station as well."

"Very good. Then the burglar must have been aware of that arrangement since he took all the trouble to get in by way of the roof."

"Undoubtedly."

"You had thought of that."

"Of course."

"Now tell me about the rope ladder."

"It was just an ordinary rope ladder, I believe."

"But what do you mean by an ordinary rope ladder? I have never heard that they were so common as to be ordinary."

"Perhaps not. I never saw one before this morning, so I could not say."

"How was it made fast to the roof of the house, and how, in your opinion, did the burglar succeed in making it fast?"

"Why, he must have thrown one end of it up there. I had not thought about it particularly, but now that you mention it, I must admit that he could not jump up there and tie it, else it would not have been necessary for him to make use of it at all."

"You think, then, that it was thrown up there?"

"I thought so. I can't say that I think so. I don't know. Somebody inside the house might have assisted. There are twelve servants, I believe. I do not know whether they are all above suspicion or not. I am, myself, in one sense a servant; you may include me in the number and call it thirteen."

"An unlucky number."

"Unlucky for one of the number, if one of them is guilty."

"Tell me how the ladder was made fast at the top."

"Why, there was a long line, or cord, with a weight attached to it. The line was long enough to reach from the roof to the ground. The line had been thrown around one of the chimneys—the one directly over this room where we are sitting—and it reached downward to the ground. I am told that the end was made fast near the ground, but I did not see it. I do not know."

"Does it not occur to you as strange that the burglar

who could throw the rope so dexterously, might as easily have detached the weight and silently have withdrawn the rope when he went away. Thus, he could have taken the ladder and the rope with him, and have left no sign as to how he succeeded in entering the house?"

"Yes; unless my theory about his being frightened away while at the safe holds good. In that case he may have thought there was no time."

"True."

"Besides, he did not go out the way he came in."

"Indeed? I did not know about that. How did the burglar leave the house?"

"By the side door which opens on a covered porch which in its turn is heavily shaded by a trailing vine."

"The door was opened from the inside to permit the egress?"

"Naturally."

"Nevertheless the burglar alarm should have worked."

"Doubtless it would have done so had not the current been turned off."

"Turned off where?"

"There at the door, and at the batteries as well. It was disconnected throughout the whole house."

"This would suggest something like undue familiarity with the interior arrangements of the house, would it not?" asked Nick, smiling.

"Decidedly. I have already suggested that there might have been a confederate inside the house."

"So you have. Have your suspicions fallen upon anyone of them?"

"No."

"You mentioned that Mrs. Sunderlin's maid left rather hastily this morning."

"Oh, yes; but one could not suspect her. At all events, she has promised to return at the end of the week, so she will not be far away; and in the meantime I can give you her name and address. Oh, no. She is out of the question."

"What was done with the rope ladder?"

"The police took it away with them."

"How long have you lived with Mrs. Sunderlin, Miss Dumont?"

"Six months."

"Then you were here when the house in the next street was robbed in a manner very similar to this affair, about two months ago?"

"Oh, yes, indeed!"

"Do you know the people who live there?"

"I know them very well."

"That affair was very similar to this one, was it not?"

"Almost identical, I believe; with the saving clause that not nearly so much was taken."

"That was because there was not so much to take, I suppose."

"Without doubt. Still there were jewels in that house which were not disturbed, which would show that the chief was not so well informed as in this case."

"Exactly. Now, Miss Dumont, you impress me with being a woman of unusual shrewdness."

"I'm obliged to you, I'm sure. Are we to return to the banter of the commencement of our interview?"

"No. I am quite serious. I suppose, like most Chicagoans, you are aware that there is an epidemic of this sort of robbery going about just at present."

"Oh, yes. I read about them; and I hear about them also. Many of them have taken place in houses where we visit."

"You make use of the plural pronoun. Are you also a guest at the houses where Mrs. Sunderlin goes?"

"Quite often. As her cousin, I am always invited, you know. She likes it that way."

"Then you have had opportunity to observe quite closely the work of this master burglar on several occasions."

"Yes; I think I have, really."

"You are shrewd and you are quick of perception. I wish you would tell me how these affairs have impressed you."

"I don't think I know how to reply to that question."

"Do you think, for example, that they are all the work of the same persons—or person?"

"That has been my idea—yes."

"Do you think there is one person concerned, or more than one?"

"I haven't the slightest idea, I'm sure."

"Do you think that in each case, as well as in this one, there may have been a confederate inside the house?"

"I have not formed any opinion on that point. In fact, I have not thought about it at all until now that you mention it."

"Do you suppose that such work could be successfully performed by a woman?"

"By a woman? Well, I had not thought about that, either, but women can do almost anything nowadays. They are lawyers and doctors. They operate automobiles and ride horses astride; I don't see why they should not be burglars as well—if they should happen to make the effort."

"You have no opinion about it, eh?"

"No, indeed. I had not even thought about it."

CHAPTER V.

THE GUEST INSIDE THE HOUSE.

When Nick Carter returned to the office of the chief of police, he announced that he had not had the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Sunderlin, the owner of the stolen jewels, but had been received by her companion.

"Ah!" said the chief. "The beautiful Miss Dumont."

"Eh?" said Nick. "You have seen her also, have you?"

"Of course. Everybody in the city has seen her, or her photographs. She is the city's latest fad."

"Fad? She doesn't look like a fad. She looks mighty real."

"She is real, too. By Jove, isn't she a beauty?"

"Yes," replied Nick, slowly. "Take it all in all I don't remember ever to have seen a more beautiful woman than Miss Dumont. She is smart, too."

"Everybody talks about her. We have an epidemic of what I call Dumontmania, or Dumontesis; which would you call it?"

"Either is good enough, and quite appropriate. So she is the rage, eh?"

"Indeed she is."

"Goes everywhere, I suppose."

"No function is complete without her. You know she is as brilliant as she is beautiful. Half a dozen millionaires have asked her to marry them, but she says 'no' to the bunch, although I am told that she hasn't a dollar to her name."

"Perhaps she is looking for a billionaire."

"Well, they are rather scarce—in Chicago. She will have to go to New York to find that sort of game. Well, Carter, what did you make of your investigation up there?"

"Not much."

"Add anything to that figure two of yours?"

"Oh, yes; a couple of very small fractions; not worth mentioning at the present moment."

"You haven't reached as much as two and a half yet, I suppose."

"Not quite. I say, chief?"

"Well?"

"I want you to give me a list of these robberies covering say—er—six months."

"They don't go back as far as that."

"How far, then?"

"The first one that can be said to belong in this class happened just three months ago."

"Well, give me a list of all those, then."

The list was soon in Nick's possession; and after thanking the chief for it, the detective took his leave. As he was going, he said:

"Chief, I am going fraction hunting to-morrow."

"Going what?"

"Hunting for fractions to add to that figure two of mine. I don't think you'll see the light of my countenance before the day after to-morrow. By that time I may have something to show you in the way of figures."

"All right. I know you like to work in your own way."

"You bet I do."

"Is there anything you want? A man to help you, or anything of that kind?"

"Nothing, thank you. So long."

Throughout the following day Nick Carter was without doubt the busiest man in the city of Chicago.

In various disguises he spent the day in going from section to section of the city, and in calling upon the persons who had suffered at the hands of the mysterious burglar.

During the three months since the burglaries had been rife, twenty-two had been committed, of which there was no doubt in the mind of the chief of police that they were the work of some hand or hands, and Nick managed to see and interview ten of the victims among these.

The morning of the second day after his interview with Cora Dumont saw him awaiting the arrival of the chief when that individual reached his office shortly after nine o'clock.

"You are bright and early, Carter," remarked the chief, shaking his hand.

"Yes. I thought I'd see you the first thing. I have discovered a few more fractions."

"Good. Pick 'em up in the street?"

"About that. I got them from your list."

"Eh? From my list?"

"I have been calling upon the people who have been robbed."

"I see. Find out much?"

"Considerable."

"Did you indeed? I thought we had not left much behind us."

"You certainly left one important point. I called at ten houses that have been robbed, and I discovered that four out of the ten were provided with the latest improved devices of burglar alarms."

"Well; what of that?"

"Mrs. Sunderlin's house also has burglar alarms."

"Yes."

"Did you forget to tell me, or didn't you happen to notice the fact that in each case where there were burglar alarms in the house, they were disconnected by the burglar?"

"I don't think I inquired at all. Burglar alarms are no good anyhow."

"Sometimes they are. It is a singular fact that in this instance, each one of the five are now, and have been in perfect working order."

"Bosh! The people who live in the houses never know whether the alarms are in order or not. Half the time they let their batteries run out and the alarms are useless for months at a time before they discover the fact. I never pay any attention to burglar alarm stories."

"Well, there is certainly a very funny story connected with four of the five alarms I have investigated."

"Funny story, eh? Let's hear it."

"Well, in each case, after the visitation of the burglar, the alarm would not work at all, and nobody in the house could find out the reason why. The result was that in each case the expert was sent for from the company's office, and it so happened that in each case the trouble was the same."

"H'm!" said the chief.

"Now, if it had happened that the same expert had been sent to each house, you doubtless would have heard of this long ago, but the company employs a good many men to do its work, and so it happened that four different experts repaired the four different alarms in question."

"Well, they all had to turn in reports of what they had done."

"Naturally; but also nobody ever reads the reports unless a question arises concerning them, as there did yesterday when I went to the office for information."

"I see."

"I found that all those reports read practically the same, but they were altogether too vague for me to build upon, so I saw and talked with the four men who had made the different repairs."

"A good idea."

"Excellent," agreed Nick, dryly. "I found that the trouble was identical in each case."

"Manufactured trouble, eh?"

"Of course."

"The connections had been tampered with, I suppose."

"No; the wires had been grounded. The current had been, in other words, stolen from the wires which ran through the houses and carried outside. It was accomplished by a very simple device which enabled the burglar, after once having completed arrangements inside the house, to approach it from the outside and with a touch to render the whole system of burglar alarm useless."

"Inside the house?"

"You see the point. Yes, inside the house."

"You say that the wires were tampered with inside the house before the burglary was committed?"

"Yes; hours before a burglary was committed. Perhaps days before it was committed. It might even have been months; because the wires would work perfectly until our burglar wished to make use of the arrangement and so render them useless by a touch of the hand, outside the house."

"You astound me."

"It is surprising."

"But, good heavens, man, an accomplice could not live first in one house and then in another, going from place to place to prepare the way for these burglaries and all that, without our having found him or her before this."

"Quite true; but I have never for a moment supposed that there was an accomplice inside of any one of the houses. That suggestion was not included in the figure two with which I began this investigation."

"Damn your figures."

"All right."

"But how in blazes could the wires be tampered with from the inside of a house unless there was an accomplice there to do it?"

"The principal might be there, you know."

"The principal! Do you mean the burglar?"

"Naturally, since the principal is the burglar."

"But that is nonsense, you know."

"I don't think so. It is not an impossibility."

"You are working the Raffles game on me, and trying to figure on a guest of the house, aren't you?"

"That is precisely what I am doing."

"And you expect me to accept such a theory as that?"

"I expect to convince you of such a fact."

CHAPTER VI.

THE FINGER OF SUSPICION.

"Now, chief," continued Nick, after a short pause, "have you followed me in all that I have just told you?"

"I think so."

"Do you recall the fact that in the beginning I stated that there were five places—or rather five houses out of the eleven I know about—in which burglar alarms had been installed?"

"Yes."

"And also that, in speaking of those where the alarm had been tampered with inside the house, I mentioned only four of them?"

"Certainly."

"Well, the fifth place puzzled me."

"Why?"

"Because, although I happened to know that the alarm had been tampered with at the time of the visitation of the burglar, the most minute inquiry failed to develop the fact that any report of it had been made by the people who lived in the house, to the company. In other words, no repairs had been asked for."

"Well, what of that?"

"That is precisely the question I asked myself when I became convinced of the fact, and the question which I sought to answer without delay."

"And you answered it, I suppose?"

"To my entire satisfaction."

"How was the answer?"

"Let me relate the circumstance first."

"Go ahead."

"While I talked with Miss Dumont, at the Sunderlin home, she told me that the burglar, after gaining admittance to the house in his most unique manner, left it by another route—that is to say, he did not relish

the idea of climbing again to the roof of the house and letting himself—or herself——"

"Still harping on the woman theory?"

"Just a little; but I will stick to the masculine pronoun, since it seems to suit you best. We can change it at any time, you know."

"Sure. Go on."

"Well, not relishing the idea of letting himself down to the ground by means of the precarious foothold of a rope ladder when he could just as well walk out through a door but for the burglar alarms, he disconnected the alarm from the side door, and ultimately went out that way."

"Well, there isn't anything so very wonderful about that, is there?"

"No. Only she also told me that he took the trouble to disconnect the burglar alarm all over the house. It struck me as odd that he should do that."

"Well?"

"You see there was no apparent necessity for such an act on his part. If he had a confederate in the house who was to affix the rope ladder to the chimney, burglar alarms were not in the way at all. In fact, if we go back as far as that, the rope ladder was entirely superfluous, for the confederate could easily have thrown the alarm off one of the doors and so admitted the robber."

"Sure thing."

"That does away with the confederate theory; that is, with a person inside and another outside the house. Now if there was no confederate, and the robber was compelled to throw the ladder over the chimney in order to reach the roof, and after that decided to leave by the door, it became necessary only that he should disconnect as much of the burglar alarm as interfered with his exit from the house. Isn't that so?"

"Sure."

"But you see, according to the statement made to me by Miss Dumont, he did more than that. He disconnected the whole business."

"She told you that?"

"Yes."

"How did she know it?"

"Well, I was curious on that point myself, but I concluded that it was best not to ask her the question, but to find out for myself. That was the reason why I wished to have a list of the houses that had been robbed, so that I might see other burglar alarms that had been tampered with, if there happened to be any."

"I see."

"I found four, as you know. The four had been used, or misused, in about the same way, and in studying the manner in which they had been tampered with, I became more or less familiar with the methods of our burglar—which, as I have already told you, were the same in every case. You see—I repeat it because I want to impress one point on you—it was the method of the burglar to fix the wires inside the house some time, nobody can tell how long a time, before the robbery, and then, when the time to do the stealing came around, all he had to do was to walk up on the outside of the house, seize the end of the wire he had already passed out through a window, and by a touch almost, disconnect the working powers of the alarm. After that it was an easy matter for him to enter the house at his leisure, either by the use of a duplicate key which he had succeeded in making, or by the use of a skeleton key."

"Well, chief, after examining the four houses I have referred to, I knew exactly the methods of the burglar's work, for it was exactly the same in each of the four cases; naturally it would be supposed to be the same in the fifth case, eh?"

"Sure thing, Nick."

"Well, it was."

"What?"

"Wait. I went to the company offices. I told the manager there who I was. I borrowed a uniform and a badge from him, made up as one of his experts and in that shape applied at the Sunderlin house and told the butler that I had been sent to examine the burglar alarm wires. Of course I was admitted at once."

"Of course."

"In the hallways I encountered Miss Dumont."

"Beautiful woman! Eh, Nick?"

"Very beautiful," responded Nick, "only at that

especial moment I had not much time to comment upon her perfections. It was my busy day. I met her in the hall, as I say, and she headed me off then and there. Asked me who I was, what I wanted, why I was there, who sent for me, and all about it."

"Well, you know, she is sort of an undermistress of the house."

"Yes," dryly; "I discovered that fact, for she ordered me out of it."

"Ordered you out?"

"Like a shot."

"You don't say so."

"Oh, yes, I do. I told her that I had been sent by the company. I did not know who had sent for me, I only knew who had sent me, and that my orders were to test and examine the wires and that I meant to do so unless she chose to call a policeman, in which case I would report to the company, etc., etc."

"What the dev——"

"Wait. I know I had no right to do all that, but I did it just the same. She assured me then that the wires were in perfect order, that they had not been out of order and a whole lot more of unnecessary information."

"Look here, Nick," interrupted the chief, "what in the world are you driving at?"

"I am driving at some of my fractions which you pretend to despise, but which I am going to compel you to respect."

"Well, go ahead; only permit me to remark that it sounds as if you were trying to prove that Miss Dumont was the confederate inside the house who assisted the burglar to enter."

"My dear chief, haven't I already satisfied you that there was no confederate inside the house? Nothing is farther from my thoughts, I assure you."

"Well; what next?"

"I insisted upon making an examination of the wires, and she insisted that I should not do so; however, I did it, and with her standing at my elbow all the while. It was quite interesting."

"You bet. I wouldn't give much for what you saw of the wires. I'll bet you couldn't see anything but that woman all the while. Instead of looking at the wires, you were looking into her eyes; eh?"

"Well, not exactly. I managed to see something of the wires, too."

"What was the result?"

"The result was about what I expected. I found that the wires had been arranged from the inside of the house exactly as they had been fixed in the other cases; but I found what was still more important, that after they had been fixed, they had been changed back to their original condition without the necessity of sending to the company for the expert to attend to them."

"Well, what does all that tell you?"

"It tells me simply that the burglar has had constant and uninterrupted access to the Sunderlin house. It tells me that the burglar was inside the house long before the robbery was committed. It tells me that the burglar was not frightened away from the safe, and that the burglar had ample time after the robbery to fix the wires back into their former position and effectiveness."

"Well, that is not much."

"No, it isn't much in itself; but don't you see that the wires of the burglar alarm were 'fixed,' not because the burglar wished really to make use of that method of entering the house, but to make it appear so?"

"No; I do not."

"Why, it is as plain as the nose on your face. Shall I make a slight *résumé* of the whole matter?"

"Yes; I wish you would. When you try to connect that beautiful creature with the robbery—and that is what you are doing—you are going a little too far for me to follow you easily. I am afraid, Nick, that you are overzealous."

CHAPTER VII.

NICK CARTER'S METHOD FOR FINDING FRACTIONS.

"Well, here you are," said Nick. "Listen now, and follow each point as I make it."

"I'll do that."

"First: There have been many burglaries committed

in this city of late which seem to be the work of one person. Investigation satisfies us that they were the work of the same person or persons.

"Second: Investigation of four of those burglaries satisfies me that the same method of tampering with the burglar alarms in the houses has been employed in each case.

"Third: The method was to attach a wire, inside the house, to the battery, or to the main wire which leads from the battery, and to carry that wire through a window to the outside of the house. Inside the house where the extra wire was attached, the main wire was in each case filed almost through so that a slight jerk would break it, and thus cut off the connection. In other words, after the extra wire had been attached, all the burglar had to do was to approach the house from the outside, seize the end of the wire that had been thrust through a convenient window, give it a jerk, and the main wire inside the house was broken short off at once. See that?"

"Yes."

"Fourth: In each case this work was done so expertly that the condition might have remained so for months without discovery. In other words it was only necessary for the burglar, after completing arrangements, to go to the house in question at any old time, jerk the wire, and then with skeleton or duplicate keys, walk into the place without difficulty, and without the least fear of sounding the alarm."

"Well?"

"Fifth: All this that I have described was actually done in each of four cases, and all of it but the jerking of the wire was done in the fifth case."

"You mean all but the final breaking of the connection?"

"Yes."

"Go ahead. What next?"

"Sixth: In all of the four cases referred to, a touch of acid had been applied to do away with the effect of the file that had been used. The mark of the file on the wire would have betrayed what had been done had not the effect of the file been removed. That was arranged so that the man who filed it would not discover the real cause of the breakage; but in the fifth case it was not supposed that an expert would be sent to examine the wire, because the wire had not actually been broken. If the alarm worked perfectly where was the necessity to send for an expert? See?"

"Yes."

"So the acid was not used. The consequence was that in the fifth case, the filing of the wire, or rather the mark left by the file on the wire, was plainly discernible. However, I did not permit Miss Dumont to see that I noticed it.

"Seventh: The wire which had been led from the battery through the window—the wire which was arranged to use for the breaking of the connection—the wire which the burglar was to seize by the end outside the house and jerk in order to break the inside connections, had been removed in the fifth case. It was gone; but it had left its trail behind it. I found where it had been attached to the main wire; I found where it had been led through the cellar window, for it had left its mark against the sill, and I found where the end had been buried in the ground behind a rosebush which grows conveniently just outside that window. But it had been removed—and there was a mark underneath that rosebush that was left there by one of the daintiest of little slippers."

"Ah!"

"Yes. A slipper about the size of those worn by our beautiful acquaintance."

"Look here, Nick, it is all nonsense to connect her with the burglary."

"Perhaps. I'm not through yet."

"Go on, then."

"Eighth: This point contains another strange coincidence. I found that in all four of the houses I have referred to before the Sunderlin place was robbed, pet dogs are kept. They are the sort of dogs that bark when they are disturbed by somebody with whom they are unacquainted."

"Well?"

"In each case the mistress of the house told me that the most remarkable thing about the robbery was that Fido slept in her room and did not give an alarm; or

that Prince always slept in his basket in the hall right by her door, and he did not bark, or that Curly was a most watchful little dog, and it was strange that he made no sound when burglars entered the house."

"Yes. Well?"

"There are also pet dogs at the Sunderlins. Miss Dumont is fond of dogs. She makes friends with them wherever she goes, and also makes a point of giving them candy—a certain kind of candy, too, of which they are very fond, and which they can smell about her the instant she appears."

"Humph!"

"It is rather remarkable that I heard in almost every place—of course in reply to well-directed questions—about Miss Dumont's marvelous faculty for fascinating dogs; and I witnessed a demonstration of the fact when I was at the Sunderlin house in the capacity of an electrician."

"How so?"

"I have told you that Miss Dumont met me in the hallway. While we were arguing about my right to examine the wires, a French poodle ran out and almost climbed up into her arms, and that dog would not be appeased until she gave it a piece of candy. Then it walked away like a statesman and was seen no more. It is a remarkable coincidence that I found a piece of candy exactly the same size and shape under a bush near a cellar window where the wire had been led outside, at one of the four houses I have already referred to."

"Confound it, Carter——"

"Wait, chief. Ninth: I have been making an examination of that rope ladder you took from the Sunderlin house."

"Well: what of that?"

"It is a new ladder and it is a new rope that is attached to it."

"I knew that."

"Yes; but I am afraid that you did not examine it very carefully."

"Why?"

"Because if you had done so you would have discovered that the ladder has never borne the weight of a person who could pull down the scales at more than fifty or sixty pounds. I tested one of the cross ropes of the ladder with my foot and found that it not only stretched considerably, but that it remained stretched. If a person had ever ascended a height sufficient to reach the roof of the Sunderlin house, and used that ladder, every cross rope in the ladder would have been stretched considerably, and the ladder would have been severely chafed where it hung over the edge of the roof. This ladder was not chafed, and I am positive that no person has ever used it for climbing at all."

"By Jove, Nick!"

"The rope attached to the ladder is also new. If the weight attached to the end of the rope had been thrown around the chimney, the rope would have to be pulled this way and that in order to adjust the ladder properly for climbing purposes. Such pulling and hauling would chafe the rope—it would certainly leave marks upon it, wouldn't it?"

"I should think so; yes."

"Did you examine it for such marks?"

"No."

"Well, you would not have found any there if you had. There were none there. The rope was not thrown around the chimney from the ground below and afterward adjusted. It was dropped around the chimney from the top and left there; it was never used, more than to tie it fast below.

"Tenth: This point is partly a summary. We have proved by the rope ladder that the robber affixed it from inside the house, and we have proved by the wire of the alarm that the burglar alarm was disconnected from inside the house—hence, we have proved that the robber was inside the house all the time and did not go outside the house till after the robbery. We have proved that the burglar had access to every house that was robbed, almost at will, during all the time of the planning of the theft, and we have proved that the burglar was known to the dogs in the several houses, and known to them in such a way that their noses would tell them at once who it was that was approaching. Instead of giving the alarm when they heard the

approach, they ran to meet the intruder in each case, knowing that a dainty sweetmeat was awaiting them."

"Then the cat is out of the bag at last. You say now, and say it boldly, that Miss Dumont is the burglar."

"That is just exactly what I do say."

"By thunder!"

"Well, I will say that also, if you wish."

"Anything more?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"Eleventh: By adroit questioning I discovered that Miss Dumont is a student of architecture."

"Architecture! What in the devil has that got to do with burglary?"

"Everything—in this particular case."

"You turn strange corners in your investigations, Carter."

"That is the way I discover my fractions."

"Well? About the architecture?"

"Miss Dumont has been preparing herself to become a professional architect. She has taken lessons ever since she has been living with Mrs. Sunderlin, and she talks a great deal about her chosen profession. She takes a great interest in the construction of every house she visits, where she becomes well enough acquainted to hobnob with the members of the family. And it is rather an odd fact that she has taken an especial interest in each of the four houses where the burglar alarms were tampered with. She even made suggestions about improvements; and was in each case taken all over the house for the purpose of examining it. One of her fads is the construction of wine closets, and to examine them she had to go to the cellars where the batteries of the burglar alarms are located. Funny, wasn't it?"

CHAPTER VIII.

A BEAUTIFUL BURGLAR.

"Chief," asked the detective, "did you ever happen to hear that little song which is entitled, 'Oh, we'll go to Vanamburg's show, see the lion and the wild kangaroo'?"

"Can't say that I ever did."

"It is said to contain nine hundred and forty-seven verses, but nine hundred and forty-six of them are so much like the first one, that they are usually omitted when the song is sung."

"What are you driving at now?"

"Only this: That I have about nine hundred and forty-seven reasons for stating that the exquisitely beautiful Miss Dumont is the burglar, but that what remains are so much like the ones I have already given that it seems useless to go into them."

"Well, I suppose the only thing left for me to do now, is to send an officer out to Lake View and have the young woman brought here, a prisoner. That seems to be the next move."

"No. I want you to let me go after her."

"Humph! Why?"

"Well, you see we haven't anything but rather weak circumstantial evidence against her just now. I want to get a confession."

"Do you think you can do that?"

"I'll admit that I'm not at all certain on that point. Miss Dumont is a sharp young woman."

"Found that out, have you?"

"Oh, yes. Shall I go?"

"Sure. Do you want a warrant?"

"No."

"I say, Carter."

"Well?"

"Don't you think it is sort of hard that you are compelled to arrest such a woman as she is?"

"It is certainly hard for her."

"What do you say to letting her go, if she will disgorge?"

"You are chief here; I am not. My duty is to bring her to you, and deliver her up to you as the representative of justice. What you choose to do with her after that is none of my business, as I see it."

"Well; bring her here. I'll think it over while you are gone."

"It might be well to bear in mind that you haven't got her here—yet."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Nothing. Everything. Only that I am prepared for surprises where that young woman is concerned."

The detective left the office of the chief, hurried to a stable and having secured a closed carriage, started for Lake View.

When he arrived at the Sunderlin mansion he sent his card directly to Miss Dumont—and in making this visit he had thrown off all disguise and the card that went up to her bore his own name—Nick Carter—in plain, strong type.

She did not keep him waiting, but came down to the library, to which room he had been shown, almost directly, and, to Nick, she seemed to have taken on an added beauty since he saw her last.

She was smiling brightly when she entered the room, but she offered the detective no greeting save a formal bow when she closed the door behind her and dropped into a chair opposite him.

"I have come from the chief of police," began Nick, formally, and she bowed in acknowledgment of what he said, but made no reply.

"He has sent me here on rather an unpleasant errand," continued Nick.

Again she bowed her head; and still she remained silent.

"It is perhaps my duty to tell you," continued the detective, "that it was I who called upon you two days ago in the guise of a parson; and also that it was I who was here yesterday, disguised as an electrician. In other words, Miss Dumont, it was I whom you conducted to the cellar in order that I might examine the wire connections of the burglar alarm."

"And may I ask why you choose to bring all this gratuitous information to me?" she asked, coldly.

"Because," replied Nick, getting down to the pith of the matter at once, and without further preamble, "investigation has satisfied the chief of police that Miss Cora Dumont can supply all the information not already in his possession concerning the various burglaries that have taken place during the last three months, and particularly the one which occurred in this house quite recently."

She did not move; she did not change her expression.

"Am I to understand that I am charged with these burglaries?" she asked, in the same slow, calm voice, and with the same smile upon her beautiful face.

"I think that is about what you are supposed to understand; yes," replied Nick.

"And you have come here to arrest me?"

"In effect—yes."

"You intend to take me to the headquarters of the police?"

"I have a carriage outside awaiting us. It is a closed carriage and you need not be seen or recognized," said Nick, surprised at the way in which she took the information and wondering, in spite of himself, what this strange young woman would do next.

"That was very thoughtful of you," she commented, in the same calm tone. "Still I think it was hardly necessary."

"No?" said Nick. "Why?"

"Do I understand that you are here to arrest me for the robbery which occurred—or is supposed to have occurred in this house, three days ago?"

"Yes."

"Then you will not care to ask me to go down to the city with you, since there was no robbery here."

Nick shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"Am I to understand that the jewels have been recovered?" asked Nick.

"By no means. You are to understand that the jewels have not been lost at all."

"Ah! They were simply mislaid. Is that it?"

"No. That is not it, either."

"Then would you mind explaining what you do mean?"

"I was under the impression that you came here to demand explanations—not to plead for them. Still, I don't mind relieving your anxiety. The jewels have not been recovered, because they have not been lost. They were not mislaid, because Mrs. Sunderlin put them away quite carefully herself, and has known all the time exactly where they were—and are."

"I understand what you say, of course," said Nick, "but I am afraid that I don't quite catch the real meaning of your remarks."

"No? And you so brilliant! You so quick of wit! How strange!"

"Would you mind being somewhat more explicit?"

"Not at all, if you will promise to be patient."

"I am a model of patience."

"You are a model of most things, aren't you, Mr. Carter?"

"I try to be," said Nick, with mock humility.

"How good of you. Have you ever been a student of sociology?"

"Only in the abstract, Miss Dumont."

"You are aware, I suppose, that society women crave a certain kind of notoriety?"

"Yes; quite a number of certain kinds, and many kinds that are uncertain, I fear."

"Then let us call this particular instance one of the kinds that are uncertain."

"Still I do not understand."

"Cannot you appreciate how trying it must have been to Mrs. Sunderlin to see the names of her society friends, coupled with complete lists of their jewels, in the papers almost every week, and sometimes oftener, with never an opportunity of getting her own name and list in the paper also?"

"Ah! I think I begin to understand you now."

"Certainly. I am never difficult to understand."

"Please continue."

"Is it necessary? Very well. Mrs. Sunderlin and I discussed the matter of the gratuitous advertising which her friends were receiving through the papers. She felt hurt that all Chicago should be able to read lists in the *Tribune*, the *Chronicle*, the *Record-Herald*, and, in fact, in all the papers, of every woman's jewels except her own. We came to the conclusion that the whole thing was a fake; that these reported robberies had not taken place at all, in fact. That in each case it was a put-up job on the part of the pretended loser, to advertise a list of her jewels; and do you know how we came to that decision?"

"I cannot imagine anything so deep as that; no."

"Really? And to think that I gave you credit for so much penetration. It was very simple. Because in each case where there were losses, we found descriptions of jewels which we both knew were never owned by the parties who pretended to the losses."

"You and Mrs. Sunderlin would seem to have kept an inventory of the jewels of your friends," said Nick, suggestively.

"Women's eyes are sharp where the jewels of another woman are concerned, Mr. Carter."

"So it would seem."

"Well, that is how we came to the decision that the

burglaries were not thefts. So, you see, we acted upon the thought, and arranged a little burglary on our own account."

"And you arranged the details."

"Certainly. I have told you that I am a hired servant. I am obliged to do as I am told."

"Won't you give me the details of this particular case?"

"With pleasure. I purchased a rope ladder and hung it from the chimney on the roof. I fixed the burglar alarm at the side door so that it would not ring, and afterward turned off the connection from the whole house, as I told you when you came here disguised as a parson."

"And is that all you did?"

"Practically; yes."

"Who filed the wire connection near the battery in the cellar, and who led the extra wire through the window, under the rosebush?" asked Nick. "Did you do that also?"

CHAPTER IX.

CHECKMATED—ALMOST—BY A WOMAN.

There are people in the world who are said to wear masks over their faces at all times. Expert gamblers are characters of this sort. It is always difficult to see through the cold exterior which they school themselves to wear. Other people in other walks of life possess the same ability in different degrees and forms.

The habitual mask which Miss Dumont wore, according to the judgment of Nick Carter, was one of happy and somewhat saucy indifference. Her best safeguard against the penetration of her thoughts, was her habitual smile.

That smile was a thing of such rare beauty that one who beheld it seldom cared to make the effort to look behind it. To look behind her smile was like stepping behind an exquisite masterpiece of art to discover the rough boards which made up the frame.

But there can be no facial mask which has not its weak points, and Miss Dumont's face was not an exception to the rule. She could smile at will, with her lips, but she could not always keep the expression of her eyes in perfect accord with her facial muscles—and she did not fully appreciate the importance of the fact that she was at that moment face to face with one of the most expert physiognomists in the world.

When the detective mentioned the filed wire and the extra wire which led out from the cellar through the window to a place under the rosebush, although she still smiled, there came, like a flash which appears only to disappear instantly, a glint of wondering fear in her eyes, and Nick Carter saw it.

"Did you file the wire connection at the battery? And did you affix the extra wire and arrange it so that it would lead out through the window, under the rosebush?" he repeated.

There was just the slightest instant of hesitation before she replied, and then, with the same inscrutable smile, she said:

"Why, yes. I did not think you would discover all that. You know we decided not to make use of that arrangement, and I removed the wire. I had forgotten all about it."

"You should have removed the traces of the wire as well; and you should have used acid on the wire at this house, the same as you did at the other houses where you also acted as expert press-agent," said Nick, coldly.

"It is now my turn not to understand," said Miss Dumont.

"Indeed! I cannot imagine your misunderstanding anything that is connected with this remarkable series of burglaries."

Nick took a piece of candy from his pocket and gave it into her hand, and she took it wonderingly.

"I have another piece exactly like it," he said, "so it will do you no good to destroy that one, or to eat it."

"Why should I do either, sir?"

"Because I found it where you dropped it, outside the cellar window at Mrs. Corcoran's."

"Where I dropped it?"

"Certainly. Doubtless you will remember that you made rather elaborate plans for a wine closet in the cellar at Mrs. Corcoran's house?"

"Oh, yes."

"It is a remarkable coincidence that the wires of the burglar alarm at that house should have been filed in the same manner that they were at this one; that there should have been an extra wire leading outside in the same manner as the one you removed because you did not want to use it—here; and that that piece of candy should have been dropped at precisely the point where that wire reached the outside world."

"It is remarkable"—she smiled back at him. "But what has the candy to do with it?"

"I will let you explain that on the witness stand, when you are on trial for some twenty odd burglaries."

"Indeed! Are they all so odd, Mr. Carter?"

"Not so odd—not so unusual as their perpetrator, I assure you. I am afraid, Miss Dumont, that your explanation comes a little late in the day. The carriage is still waiting, and I will ask you to go to headquarters with me."

"Unfortunately I cannot, this morning, Mr. Carter," she replied, calmly. "Mrs. Sunderlin cannot spare me."

"Then if you will ask Mrs. Sunderlin to receive me, I will ask her to accompany us. I would like to hear her explanation also."

"Oh, I will get her at once."

"Pardon me. You will ring the bell and send for her. I cannot permit you to leave my presence now until I have delivered you to the chief of police."

"No? Am I really under arrest?"

"Really."

"Have you a warrant for me? However, I will not press that question since I do not care to see the horrid thing."

She crossed the room and rang the bell, and ordered that Mrs. Sunderlin be asked to come to them; and presently she came bustling into the room, a woman past forty, with a faded, painted face, bleached hair, and enveloped in a perfect blaze of jewels. She was a perfect type of the newly-rich class which infests the Western cities, and she was evidently prepared for the interview she was to face.

"Ah! Good-morning!" she exclaimed, effusively. "Cora told me if she should ring the bell and send for me, I was to understand that you had discovered our little hoax. Dear me! I am so chagrined! What in the world will the chief of police think about us for making him all this trouble? But, really, I suppose I ought to be satisfied, for if this all gets into the papers, I will be the talk of the town, won't I? At least, I will have the satisfaction of having exposed the others. We made a botch of it, didn't we, Mr. ——? Pardon me; I did not catch your name. Oh, thank you. Carter. We made a terrible botch of it, I fear."

"I am to understand, then," said Nick, "that the story told to me by Miss Dumont, is true in every particular?" asked Nick, coldly.

"Why, certainly. I don't know just what she has told you, but it is true whatever it is, for Cora is dreadfully truthful, especially when she is referring to one's age."

"Your jewels were not stolen, or even mislaid?"

"Certainly not; but I did get a list of them into the papers, didn't I?"

Nick turned again to Miss Dumont.

"What about the marks on the safe in the dining room?" he asked.

She shrugged her shoulders disdainfully.

"They are old marks, I believe," she replied. "At least they were there when I came into the family six months ago—were they not, madam?" and she turned to Mrs. Sunderlin for confirmation of her statement.

"Really, I don't remember. I suppose so," said the older woman. Then, with sudden assumption of offended dignity, she addressed the detective:

"I regret, sir," she said, "that our perfectly harmless hoax has caused you and the police department so much unnecessary trouble, but it is too late to undo it now, and it must stand as it is. If the chief of police desires to consult with me personally about the matter, I will be at home to him any afternoon after four, and until six, when he chooses to call. You may tell him that, my good man, if you will; and now, I will ask you to excuse us."

Nick hardly knew whether to frown or to smile. Whether to take offense or to be amused. He felt himself dismissed, and he could see the tantalizing smile that flashed across the face of the peerless beauty who was now seated in the shadow near a huge case of books.

That the interview was at an end, so far as the present conditions were concerned, he was fully aware, and the women unquestionably had the best of it. They had defied him in a manner which had rendered him utterly helpless for the moment, and he regretted now that he had not brought a warrant with him, for he was as firmly convinced as ever of the guilt of Cora Dumont.

"Only," he thought, "the case has taken a new turn. There is more in it than I supposed; more than I could suppose, not having had the delight of meeting Mrs. Sunderlin."

He rose, in obedience to the dismissal, took his hat and crossed the room. At the door he turned and condescended to play a little act himself, for their benefit, for he had already determined what his next move would be.

"Ladies," he said, "I am overwhelmed with confusion to think that for a moment I could have imagined that one so beautiful and altogether charming as Miss Dumont could have had a hand or taken any part in such a thing as a burglary. It is too dreadful even to have thought of. Permit me to bid you good-morning."

Once outside the house, he called his driver and ordered him to drive with all speed to the nearest magistrate.

A full half hour was consumed in drawing the necessary affidavits and in swearing out the warrants he wanted, but by the end of that time he hastened back to his carriage again and directed that he be taken at once to the Sunderlin mansion.

To the butler he said:

"I wish you would say to Mrs. Sunderlin and also to Miss Dumont that I have returned in great haste and that I will be glad if they will receive me without formality and immediately. It is of great importance, for their own sakes, that they see me at once."

He was ushered again into the library, and five minutes later Miss Dumont appeared alone.

"Mrs. Sunderlin has gone out in the carriage," she announced. "I hope that you can dispense with her presence at this interview, and make use of me in her place."

"Oh, yes," replied Nick. "I have no doubt that I can find her later. You were the one I most desired to see just now, for you were the one whom I feared would escape—if you had half a chance."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Miss Dumont, when I was here an hour ago, I was

without a warrant, as you supposed. Consequently I could not arrest you at that time. Since I was here, I have taken the precaution to procure one, and also a special deputy's badge, so that now I can arrest you with perfect impunity. I have returned to do that very thing."

"To arrest me? For a robbery which was never committed?"

"Oh, no; but for ten robberies that I know were committed. There are others, too, Miss Dumont, but I have investigated only ten of them. I have sworn the warrant out on four; but they will be, I think, sufficient. You are under arrest. I have a warrant also, for the arrest of Mrs. Sunderlin, as an accomplice, but I will return for her later. I will ask you now to send for your hat and coat, and then to go with me to police headquarters. Any further explanations you may have on tap must be made, not to me, but to the proper authorities."

CHAPTER X.

CORA DUMONT'S PLOT FOR LIBERTY.

For a full minute after Nick ceased speaking, Cora Dumont stared into his face, silently.

The smile, which was her mask, had disappeared, and her matchless face was even more beautiful now, with the touch of fear, mingled with defiance, glowing in her eyes.

She looked straight into Nick's eyes, and she did not falter; neither did the rich, warm blood forsake her cheeks and leave it pallor stricken; and Nick, watching her narrowly, wondered at this woman, so young, so beautiful, so brilliant, and yet—a thief.

He had not been in much doubt as to the manner in which she would accept arrest at his hands, but as he watched her he began to realize that he had not yet sounded all the depths of which she was capable—not by any means.

Here was no terror. Here was no shadow of remorse. Here was no effort at pleading against immutable fate. Here was no crawfishing, which is usually woman's trump hand when caught in the act, so to speak.

Here was no sullen defiance. And he asked himself what was here.

The utter calmness of her voice startled him when at last she broke the silence. It seemed, indeed, to be utterly without emotion—or, if there was the shadow of one present, it partook more of the elements of abstract curiosity than anything else. Indeed, she seemed to be quite as much in doubt regarding her own actions, as Nick Carter was surprised at them—or, rather, because of them.

"I have often wondered just how this moment would affect me—when it came," she said, slowly. "Are you in very great haste, Mr. Carter? Would you mind chatting with me a few moments, before we start?"

"Not at all. While we are waiting, it is possible that Mrs. Sunderlin may return."

"Oh, no. She won't return—at least, not until late to-night. But let us forget her. I wish you would tell me when you first suspected me of these crimes?"

"I hardly know. I suspected that it was the work of a woman, from the first."

"Why?"

"Chiefly because I doubted a man's capacity for just this sort of accomplishment. Your adventures——"

"Thank you for that word."

"Your adventures had a certain touch of the artistic about them, which impressed me as being entirely feminine. There was a deftness, a subtlety, a lightness

of touch and a thoroughness about your work which I doubted a man's power to accomplish."

"I suppose I ought to accept that speech as a sort of compliment," she said, with a little grimace which had a pathetic touch of her old raillery about it.

"As you please," rejoined Nick; "although I doubt the wisdom of any person receiving a statement of that kind as a compliment; particularly a beautiful woman who could hold the world at her feet, worshiping her, if she were only good as well as beautiful."

"Good, and beautiful," she murmured. "Do the two ever go together, I wonder."

"Often," replied Nick, with conviction.

"I was never good, you know," she said, without a trace of egotism; "but I was always told that I was beautiful. Beauty is a chum for vanity, and vanity is the precursor of crime."

"Perhaps," admitted Nick.

"That has been my experience at least. Did you not say that you also had a warrant for Mrs. Sunderlin?"

"Yes."

"But it is impossible that you should have obtained any evidence against her, and——"

"I can obtain that later—after I have arrested her. I swore the warrant out on 'information and belief,' and it will hold, at least until the court is satisfied that evidence cannot be found against her."

"I even have doubts as to your ability to convict me, Mr. Carter."

"I can understand why you might entertain such doubts. I do not."

"You have obtained only circumstantial evidence."

"It is very strong; and there is more, when I choose to search for it."

She smiled brightly, and Nick could see that her old dare-devil character was uppermost again.

"Suppose," she said, "suppose that I am really the guilty thing you think I am; suppose that I really did commit all those burglaries, and steal all those jewels—thousands and thousands of dollars' worth, was it not?—suppose all that, although the supposition is almost ludicrous, for who would suspect me, to look at me, of being capable of such things; of possessing the strength and the nerve to carry them out, to say nothing of the wisdom to plan them? And what jury could be made to believe that I did it all, if I should tell that jury that I did not? Suppose I say that I did do it all, what effect would it have upon the charge against me, or upon the charge against the person who really did it, if a great part of the stolen goods were to be returned to the people who have been robbed?"

"It might have the effect of shortening the sentence; nothing more," replied Nick.

"Even a full confession from a guilty soul, coupled with a return of the stolen property, would not induce the courts to let the guilty one go free, you say?"

"It would not. It could not."

"Then what is the use of confession? And what is the use of restoration?"

"Very little in a case of this kind, I must admit."

"Justice is cold, isn't it?" she asked, with a smile.

"Quite so," said Nick.

She tried another method.

"Mr. Carter," she asked, "will you tell me how many there are beside yourself, who may be aware of my probable—no, possible guilt?".

"I have told the chief of my suspicions. He is the only one."

"How did he receive the information?"

"Doubtingly, at first. I convinced him, however, I think."

"You mean that you convinced him against his will, do you not?"

Something like that—yes."

"You know that a woman convinced against her will is of the same opinion still.' Are not men sometimes like that?"

"Where a beautiful woman is concerned. I have no doubt that they are."

"And would not the chief be one of those?"

"Hardly. His official position could not admit of such a thing."

"And you? Are you not convinced also against your will?"

"I am certainly convinced against my earnest wishes; it amounts to almost the same thing, I think."

"Believing me guilty, you do me the honor to wish that I were not. Is that it?"

"Precisely it."

"Let us suppose again that I am guilty; mind, I do not wish to be understood at all as admitting that I am, but let us suppose that I am. We will say that I return the stolen property, or, at least a large part of it, for it is not likely now that all of it could be restored, and let us also suppose that my crimes, my wrong-doing, my erring ways began and have ended with this series of burglaries we are discussing; could you not, in that case, if you felt assured that a true and good life would be the result of this experience—could you not, in such a case, be induced to forget what you know about me? Could you not be induced——"

Nick held up one hand and stopped her.

"Say no more," he said. "It is useless. What I would like to do—now, what I would take personal delight in doing, and what I must do, are two different things. I must do my duty."

"Let us suppose one more case, since we are supposing so much. Suppose we had been friends from childhood; suppose you had learned to love me; sup——"

"This is nonsense, Miss Dumont."

"No; it is not. I want to know how much of an apostle of duty you are. Suppose you did love me—would your duty stand before your love."

"I am very glad, Miss Dumont, that I can say that I never had the misfortune to be placed in a position where I had to choose between two such relentless masters. You must be satisfied with that answer. And now, I think we must be going."

She did not rise from her chair at his suggestion. Instead, she remained with her eyes fixed upon him in a dreamy, half-staring expression which he could not fathom. And then she herself replied to the question she would have asked.

"You would not," she said. "I read you better than you think. I have heard about you a great many times, Mr. Carter. I have wondered if I should ever see you. Do you know what I would have done if I had met you two months—nay, a month before this happened?"

"I am sure that I have no idea."

"I would have—I am sure that I could have made you love me, and if I had done that, you would say now, 'Cora, go free and sin no more.'"

Nick shrugged his shoulders and made no reply.

"I wish you would believe that I am not a hardened criminal," she said, pathetically. "I would like you to understand that if I am guilty of what you have charged, I have not been across the borderland of respectability in any other way."

"I will believe that," said Nick. "I do believe it."

"Thank you. Shall we go now?"

"Yes."

"Must I have my things brought to me here?"

"Yes."

"May I order a piece of cake and a glass of sherry before we go?"

"Certainly."

"Will you indulge me so far within the limits of respectability—will you do me the honor to take a glass of sherry with me? It will place us on the same level for a moment, again; like giving a cigar to your servant, isn't it?"

"If you wish it; yes," replied Nick.

While she rang the bell and waited for the servant to appear, Nick strolled over to a window and stood looking out upon the street; and when the servant departed on his errand, he remained there, for he did not care to continue the discussion any longer.

Cora Dumont was so beautiful that she cast a spell over him in spite of his efforts to avoid it, and he found himself deeply regretting the part he was forced to play in this life drama.

Contrary to his expectations, she did not approach him or attempt to reopen the conversation while the servant was absent to procure the refreshments, and so he remained at the window, looking out, and thinking.

He was deeply sorry for this young woman, whose life must now be forever blighted by all that she had done.

He was still looking out of the window when the servant returned, and he did not alter his position at all.

Cora Dumont received the silver salver from the servant and dismissed him.

Then, as she turned to place it on the table in the center of the room, she glanced sharply at the detective and saw that his back was toward her.

She put the salver down, and while she watched him with eager eyes, she quickly removed a glittering, jeweled ring from one of her fingers.

Still watching him, she held the ring over one of the glasses, and, by the pressure of a hidden spring, opened the top of it.

Then, if one had been watching her closely, one would have seen a quantity of liquid, equal to about three drops, fall silently into the sherry; and instantly the ring was snapped shut, replaced upon her finger, and she was standing back from the table inviting Nick Carter to turn around and join her.

All that time while she was working over the wine with the ring, his back had been turned toward her, and it was impossible, she thought, that he should have seen her act.

She drew up a chair for him, and herself occupied one on the opposite side of the table. Then she ate her cake and sipped at the sherry, indicating, by a gesture, the glass that had been provided for him.

Nick took it in his hand and held it up to the light for a moment; then he touched it to his lips, but he did not swallow any, and he sat holding the glass in his hands while she watched him with eager eyes.

She did not ask him to drink. She could not do that. It would have made her appear too eager; but she munched her cake and wondered why he dallied with his glass.

Following the direction of his eyes, she saw that he was looking at a painting that hung against the wall, and while she looked, he referred to it.

"It is a beautiful painting," he said. "Who is the artist?"

"I forget, really," she replied.

"There is the name in one corner, but I cannot read it from where I sit," he said; and she, fearing that he would leave his glass long enough to discover the name of the artist, and dreading lest he would neglect it altogether, rose hastily and crossed to the picture.

"It is a McCord," she said, returning. "I might have known it. No one else uses a palette knife entirely and ignores the brush. Ah! I see you have finished with your wine. Do you wish to go now? At once?"

"Yes," replied Nick, repressing a yawn.

"Sit where you are. My things are here. I will put them on as quickly as possible."

She crossed the room to a mirror and began the adjustment of her hat, taking a very long time about it; but, at last, after many moments, she turned about quickly.

Then she uttered a cry of delight, and bent forward, staring at Nick, for he was stretched out in the chair, his body had sunk down deeply within it, and his head was lying back against the upholstery.

"Mr. Carter," she said, softly; but he did not reply.

"Mr. Carter," she called again; and still he did not reply.

"Mr. Carter!" she almost shouted, but he seemed not to hear her.

Then she straightened up with a strange smile on her face, and for a moment stood looking down upon him.

Presently, after she had studied him for a full minute, she spoke.

"You will sleep soundly for fourteen hours, Mr. Carter," she said, "and by that time, if I have not made good my escape, I deserve to be captured again; that is all. I could almost have loved you for your kindness—the kindness in your voice and manner, and I am glad that the drug I have given you will really do you no harm."

She crossed to the door and halted there for a moment. Then she spoke again.

"Good-by, Mr. Carter," she said. "Sleep on."

"Are you ready, Miss Dumont?" asked Nick, opening his eyes. "Then, in that case, I think we will say good-by at headquarters instead of here."

She smiled and came toward him across the room.

"You fooled me," she said. "Do you know I am almost glad of it. How did you know that the wine was drugged?"

"The window acted as a mirror; otherwise I would not have kept my back toward you. I have had people offer me wine before, Miss Dumont."

"Of course. How foolish of me. And you threw it in the grate when I crossed to look at the name on the painting?"

"Yes. So now, if you are quite ready and there are no more schemes of escape, we will go."

"If there are other schemes," she said, smiling at him, "I will not try to work them on you. I am ready. Come."

And they went out of the house and entered the carriage together.

THE END.

The next number of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY will be number 392, and will be something in the manner of a sequel to this story. The title will be "A Queen of Her Kind; or, A Beautiful Woman's Nerve." This story will relate more of the experiences of Cora Dumont and her accomplice, Mrs. Sunderlin, and of the wiles which beautiful Cora succeeded in throwing around the great detective to win him over to her ways. In this story, Nick Carter meets with one of the most thrilling experiences of his life, and encounters a narrow escape from a fate which would have overthrown him forever.

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